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Byzantine Diplomacy: Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990
(Review)

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biography of a medieval author with the information needed for further research." At present, the series comprises two subseries, Historical and Religious Writers of the Latin West, edited by Patrick J. Geary, and English Writers of the Late Middle Ages, edited by M. C. Seymour. Among the authors to be treated in the latter, the subseries in question here, are William Langland, John Gower, the *Gawain* poet, Thomas Hoccleve, and Sir Thomas Malory, several of whom make poor subjects for biographical research strictly speaking. Regardless of one's view of recent death-of-the-author theories, one has to wonder about the value of reference biographies devoted to virtually untraceable figures like Langland or the *Gawain* poet as well as ask what further research anyone could possibly undertake into their lives. It is not clear, in fact, what scholarly need the English Writers series fills, apart from that of updating the bibliographies contained in such reference works as the *Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1500* (gen. ed. Albert E. Hartung) and *Middle English Prose: A Critical Guide to Major Authors and Genres* (ed. A. S. G. Edwards).

There is perhaps a case to be made for the utility of Seymour's *Sir John Mandeville*, since the only recent critical survey of the authorship question is Rita Lejeune's valuable 1964 study, "Jean de Mandeville et les Liégeois" (in *Mélanges . . . offerts à M. Maurice Delbouille*; J. R. S. Phillips's 1993 essay, "The Quest for Sir John Mandeville," in *The Culture of Christendom*, ed. Marc Antony Meyer, contains a briefer overview but otherwise consists of underinformed speculation). Unfortunately, Seymour adds almost nothing to Lejeune's study, offering little more than a rehash of the evidence and opinions already available in the introductions and notes to his several editions of the Middle English redactions. Some of his newer information (e.g., regarding the author's use of biblical citations) is borrowed from Christiane Deluz's *Le Livre de Jehan de Mandeville: Une "géographie" au XIV^e s.* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988), an erudite study whose worth Seymour does not sufficiently recognize, while some of his bolder claims (e.g., the author was "a fluent reader of Latin," p. 23) are offered without evidence and contradict Deluz's better-supported conclusions (e.g., the author's Latin was "assez incertain," p. 67). In addition, Seymour's plausible but unprovable assertion that the still-unlocated author of *The Book of John Mandeville* was French—not English, as both Lejeune and Deluz believe—makes nonsense of the subseries's proclaimed focus on English writers. The bibliography is inadequate, omitting among other things S. A. J. Bradley's accounts of the Danish version and Mary B. Campbell's *Witness and the Other World*. A detailed presentation of *The Book's* complex textual history would have been a much more valuable aid to further research.

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JONATHAN SHEPARD and SIMON FRANKLIN, eds., *Byzantine Diplomacy*. Papers from the Twenty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Cambridge, March 1990. (Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, 1.) Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1992. Pp. xi, 333; 6 black-and-white illustrations. \$69.95.

The Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies has begun its publication series auspiciously with the present book. I have complained previously in the pages of this journal about pro forma editing, but Shepard and Franklin have done their job well here. Usage, including abbreviations in footnotes, is uniform. Authors are aware of each other's work, and their articles are laced with cross-references.

The editors are a bit less successful in dealing with another dilemma that plagues anthologies: the problem of theme. To be entirely fair, the difficulty may be an insoluble one, especially with as stellar a cast of writers as this group (Ihor Ševčenko, Robin Cormack, John Haldon, Judith Herrin, Alexander Kazhdan, Hugh Kennedy, Ruth Ma-

crides, and Nicolas Oikonomides, among others). In theory *Byzantine Diplomacy* has a narrow focus: it is concerned with the techniques of Byzantine diplomacy rather than the narrative history of individual missions or of Byzantine foreign relations as a whole. But it is rarely possible entirely to eliminate narrative; and some articles, notably in the section "Byzantium and Others," are more chronological than analytical in scope. One problem this book touches only lightly is how one can treat international diplomacy as a separate category when Byzantium (like most states before the Renaissance and most nonwestern governments until the nineteenth century) did not clearly differentiate between foreign and domestic affairs.

After an introduction by Alexander Kazhdan, "The Byzantine Notion of Diplomacy," *Byzantine Diplomacy* is divided into five further sections: "Phases of Byzantine Diplomacy," "Byzantium and Others," "Sources on Diplomacy," "Art in Diplomacy," "Social Aspects," and an afterword, "The Less Obvious Ends of Byzantine Diplomacy." My usual procedure—that of noting those articles that most attracted my attention—is admittedly idiosyncratic, but it has not elicited complaints in previous reviews and so I follow it again here.

Evangelos Chrysos, Jonathan Shepard, and Nicolas Oikonomides delineate the problem of periodization. One possibility (especially appealing to western medievalists) is to do so in terms of Byzantine relations with the Latin West. Until 800 the old empire's dealings with the Latins were those of a patron with a client. Between 800 and ca. 1200 the two were on an approximately equal footing. After 1204 Byzantium increasingly "appeared in the role of an impoverished and feeble supplicant" (p. 5). But such a periodization is at times inappropriate for Byzantine diplomacy with the Muslim world or with the peoples of the north. A professional diplomatic corps was in all periods frequently supplemented by courtiers or civil servants who, though experienced, were without specialized training or knowledge. Especially in the late period, one even comes across outright amateurs, such as members of the nobility, medical doctors, clergy, or scholars, as diplomats.

"Byzantium and Others" deals with diplomacy with (old) Rome, the Franks, Khazars, Arabs, the Russian church, and the Ottomans. Hugh Kennedy makes the surprising observation that Byzantine diplomacy with the Arabs was largely restricted to negotiations for exchanges of prisoners of war, truces, and other short-term issues. There was little attempt at "creat[ing] the conditions for longer term security" (p. 133).

The section on sources contains two of the most interesting articles in the book and one disappointment. Roger Scott's short piece, "Diplomacy in the Sixth Century: The Evidence of John Malalas," is succinct and packed with information. Scott at least alludes to the question of whether or not premodern states could adequately distinguish between internal and foreign policy, venturing the opinion that they were indeed able to do so (p. 163). Ihor Ševčenko's learned and witty "Re-Reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus" is actually an annotated translation of a memorandum from Constantine himself, now a resident of "Ouranoupolis." The once shy and reclusive *basileus* waxes merry over his apotheosis by modern scholars as a scholar-emperor whose enlightened patronage of art and learning started the classical revival of the Macedonian epoch. In fact, Constantine observes, he was not well educated. Although he did do some writing, many of the works attributed to him were actually authored by others. His classical allusions in some cases were merely cribbed from secondary sources, and in others exist only in the minds of modern scholars, eager to see humanistic erudition in texts where there is none. Adding insult to injury, the imperial author goes on to write that much of the Macedonian "renaissance" is itself a fiction. Indeed, Byzantine civilization does not compare favorably with roughly contemporary cultures further to the east—the Porphyrogenitus cites India and Japan as comparisons. It seems to this reviewer that Constantine has been sneaking

out of Ouranopolis to visit The Other Place and conversing with the likes of Gibbon and Voltaire. Medieval civilization had its collective mind fixed on the next world (as the *basileus* should well understand by now), not this one, and that is reflected in its art and literature. Constanze Schummer's brief piece on Liudprand of Cremona makes the obvious point that despite his sophistication and knowledge of Greek, the Lombard bishop was not by temperament fitted for diplomacy—something that also could be said of Humbert of Silva Candida in the next century.

After a section on the diplomatic uses of art, *Byzantine Diplomacy* concludes with P. T. Antonopoulos's essay, "The Less Obvious Ends of Byzantine Diplomacy," showing how a skilled negotiator (in this case Peter the Patrician in the sixth century) could frequently wring at least partial success from what was apparently a failed mission.

Some recent research has contended that the Byzantine diplomatic corps was considerably less well informed and more amateurish—in short, less *byzantine*—than scholarly legend would have us believe. But I suspect most of the contributors to this book would agree with Oikonomides' remark that especially in periods where military victories were few or entirely absent, "the survival of the empire all this time was . . . due to its efficient foreign policy and to its efficient diplomacy" (p. 88).

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GÉRARD SIVÉRY, *Philippe Auguste*. Paris: Plon, 1992. Paper. Pp. 429.

It is not surprising that the observance in 1979 of the eight hundredth anniversary of Philip Augustus's accession stimulated new interest in that pivotal figure. In that year Michel Nortier brought out the last volume of Philip's charters; the following year Robert-Henri Bautier organized an impressive colloquium in Paris (papers published in 1982); my own *Government of Philip Augustus* appeared in 1986 (French edition in 1991) and my edition of the *Registres de Philippe Auguste* in 1993 (dated 1992). Now Gérard Sivéry, professor at Lille, who previously has concentrated on economic history of the Flemish region, has brought out still another book on Philip. Sivéry proposes to step back and offer a "long view of Philip and political power" (p. 7). Successive chapters treat the well-known topics of baronial rivalry, the crusade, governmental reforms, territorial conquests, and the king's relations with the church and contemporary society. Framed chronologically, his narrative recounts both the king's personal development and his political success. In his view Philip's final achievement was to shape the royal domain into a vast seigneurie, thereby outweighing the power of the great magnates and reducing their influence over the kingdom.

For three-quarters of a century the acknowledged authority on Philip Augustus was the German scholar Alexander Cartellieri, whose *Philipp II. August, König von Frankreich* (1899–1922) assembled and interpreted the chronicle evidence for the reign in four massive and magisterial volumes. Sivéry respects Cartellieri but proposes to depart from his approach by making use of the "collected administrative acts, inquests, financial accounts, and the remarkable description of the kingdom" (that is, the registers, p. 7); in fact, he has not done so. The published *actes*, the *Layettes du Trésor des chartes*, and the various financial accounts contribute scarcely more to his narrative than to Cartellieri's. He further ignores the newly discovered account of 1221 published by Nortier in 1981 and makes little use of the registers, to which he has had access in manuscript and on which he published an incomplete and flawed article in 1984. Like Cartellieri, Sivéry relies principally on the contemporary chroniclers, particularly the royal historiographers Rigord and Guillaume le Breton, occasionally adding others from the Flemish region and a later period.